

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



Burton Memorial Lecture: From Cana (Husn Ghorab) to Sabbathath (Shabwa): The South Arabian Incense Road

Author(s): Harold Ingrams

Source: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2 (Oct., 1945), pp. 169-185

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25222031>

Accessed: 23/05/2013 22:14

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Burton Memorial Lecture

From Cana (Husn Ghorab) to Sabbathath (Shabwa): The South Arabian Incense Road

By HAROLD INGRAMS

(PLATES XVI-XVIII)

SOMETIME in 1921 I was sitting in the shade of a mango tree on the top of a bluff overlooking the mangrove-filled creek of Chake-Chake in Pemba, called by the Arabs the Green Island. I was the guest of the Sheikh of the Mauli tribe, Sheikh Salim bin Khalif, at his clove plantation of Kaole. There were a lot of Maulis, who came from the Wadi al Ma'awil in 'Uman, in positions of authority in Pemba, and with me sat Sheikh Abdulla Mbaruk al Mauli, the Mudir of Chake-Chake. We were watching the little ship *Khalifa* far out at her anchorage. Presently one of my boat-boys climbed up the hill and handed me a large bag of mail brought from the ship. In it was a parcel. I opened it and took out the two fat volumes of *Zanzibar, City, Island, and Coast*. That was my introduction to the works of Sir Richard Burton.

Sheikh Abdulla and I looked through the pictures, and I read to him what Burton said of Chake-Chake some seventy to eighty years before. It did not seem likely that anyone would be alive who had seen Burton in Pemba, but later Sheikh Abdulla took me to see Sheikh Ali Muhammad Rubhi who remembered Burton's arrival quite well. He thought Burton had been the first Englishman to visit the island, and remembered some Portuguese treasure hunters coming before. This old man died shortly after at the age of 104.

When we reached Aden in 1934 I was again on ground very familiar to Burton. I have now collected most of Burton's books and what has been written about him, and I have visited or lived in several of the places Burton visited. When my wife and I went to Harar in 1942 we used *First Footsteps* as our guide. This involves entering Harar by the southern gate, whereas to-day the main entrance is at the north, but there have been few changes in Harar, and Burton's description is still a good guide. Wandering round Trieste I have thought of Burton's last seventeen years there, and on many leaves I have paid pilgrimage to his tomb at Mortlake.

Once, having lost the way, I found myself outside the Anglican church, and asked a local if he could tell me the way to the Catholic. "I'm afraid I don't rightly know," he said, "that's not it; that's the Christian church." I could not help thinking how that might have amused Burton.

I can claim, then, to have had an interest in Burton for many years, but I never imagined that one day I should be called upon to deliver a lecture in memory of him, and I must say that my knowledge of him makes me feel particularly inadequate to do so. So feeling unfitted to give a lecture "on the great explorer and his travels" I have chosen the alternative of "a cognate subject".

Burton never managed to reach the Hadhramaut, though as Mr. Bertram Thomas recalled in his Burton lecture, one of his schemes was to cross from Mecca to Mukalla. That journey was done by Mr. Philby in 1936, and he and Mr. Thomas have between them removed "that opprobrium to modern adventure, the huge white blot which in our maps still notes the Eastern and Central regions of Arabia". Of the country he was to cross on his way to Mukalla, Burton says, "Of the Rub' al Khali I have heard enough, from credible relators, to conclude that its horrid depths swarm with a large and half-starving population; that it abounds in wadys, valleys, gullies, and ravines, partially fertilized by intermittent torrents," and this to me reads much more like a description of the steppe lands of the Hadhramaut than it does of the Rub al Khali. This area, though by no means swarming with people, is much more thickly populated than the Rub' al Khali. Its population is always half starving, and it certainly abounds in wadies, gullies, and ravines which I should not have thought was a good description of the Rub' al Khali. On Mr. Philby's journey from Mecca to Mukalla he made the first thorough preliminary examination of Shabwa, and Shabwa was the main goal of the short journey I am going to describe. I cannot help thinking how this journey would have appealed to Burton. Not only would he have had plenty to say about its beduins, but the archæology would have given him enough material to fill another stout volume or two. By the time Burton made his pilgrimage Welsted had already discovered the first Himyaritic inscriptions, including one I saw on my journey, and Von Wrede had found another long one, also on my route, which was not seen again till nearly a hundred years later. My wife rediscovered it. Mr. Philby has kindly undertaken

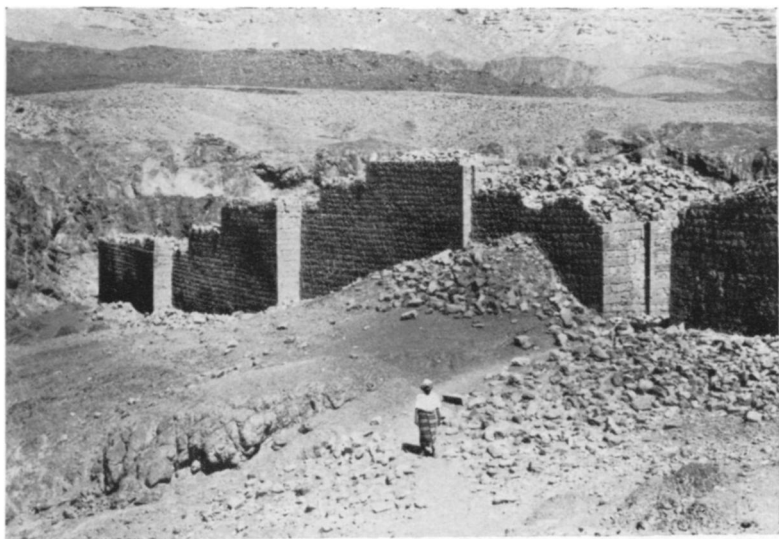


FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

to comment on some of the inscriptions on my route, so that you will be provided at the end with a sort of archæological *bonne bouche* to make up for the plain fare I have to offer (Pl. XVI, 2).

Nearly all we have known of the incense route until recent years comes from the classical writers, and most of it from Pliny. Pliny gives details about the finance of the trade and tells us that at Shabwa a tenth of the incense was taken by the priests and other shares went to the King's secretaries, the keeper of the incense, the gatekeepers, and other employees. Probably these were just the standard bribes or rake-offs taken in South Arabia to-day. The king of the Gebanitæ took a tax when it passed through his country, and all along the route there was at one place water to pay for, at another fodder, lodging, and various taxes and imposts besides. The Carnaites, a northern Minæan community, took a share, and at Petra the Nabatæans levied a large tax. By the time the incense got to the Mediterranean the expenses on each camel-load were 688 denarii. The detailed information in Pliny and Ptolemy is so accurate that one wonders if they had not access to the account of some actual traveller, an Alexandrine may be, who had made his way from Cana to the Mediterranean. What a fascinating find such an account would be.

Of recent years interest in the incense route has been largely revived by Miss Stark, whose book, *The Southern Gates of Arabia*, gave an excellent summary of what was known.

In the winter of 1937-8 she came again to the Hadhramaut with Miss Caton Thompson, the archæologist, and Miss Gardner, the geologist, and made for Hureidha. The work of that winter has been described by Miss Stark in *Winter in Arabia* and by Miss Caton Thompson in *The Tombs and Moon Temple of Hureidha*. At the end of their stay Miss Stark travelled down from Hureidha via 'Amd and the Deiyin country and 'Azzan to Balhaf. She was inclined to think that the incense route might lie through Wadi 'Amd and Wadi Jerdan and the country she traversed.

Miss Caton Thompson's admirable monograph contributes more than anything we have previously had to our knowledge of the ancient south Arabians, and we have a picture of a small agricultural community lying on the eastern outskirts of the old Hadhramaut civilization just as now it lies on the western. It is no matter for regret that her work was done not in what were the great centres

of old, which will undoubtedly receive attention in the future, but in a country village that might well be neglected.

I may have been over bold in calling my lecture "The Incense Road". Miss Caton Thompson says:—

"Nothing would be permanently gained by attempting to place the ancient Madhab of our pioneer excavations on or off a still hypothetical Incense Route, that seductive thoroughfare of speculation so zealously explored of recent years by ready writers regardless of the essential requirement of an archæological distribution map; and prone, moreover, to over-simplify the excursion by assuming the synchronism of the few surface ruins which appear on the as yet very incomplete topographical surveys of Southern Arabia."

In the face of this I must attempt some justification for my belief that the road I am about to describe is the beginning of the main incense road from South Arabia to the Mediterranean. I do not wish to infer that incense was not carried by other roads as well. Ancient Arabia was no less subject to internal trouble than modern Arabia, and no doubt traffic had frequently to be diverted.

The Periplus tells us:—

"After Eudæmon Arabia (Aden) there is a continuous length of coast, and a bay extending two thousand stadia or more, along which there are Nomads and Fish-eaters living in villages (exactly as there are to-day); just beyond the cape projecting from this bay (which is very clear on the map) there is another market town by the shore, Cana, of the Kingdom of Eleazus, the Frankincense country; and facing it there are two desert islands, one called Island of Birds, the other Dome Island, one hundred and twenty stadia from Cana. (Both these islands are easily identifiable to-day, the one because it is the haunt of countless sea birds which provide valuable guano and the other because it is dome-shaped). Inland from this place lies the metropolis Sabbathath, in which the king lives. All the frankincense produced in the country is brought by camels to that place to be stored and to Cana on rafts held up by inflated skins after the manner of the country and in boats.

"Beyond Cana, the land receding greatly, there follows a very deep bay stretching a great way across and the Frankincense country, mountainous and forbidding. . . . On this bay there is a very great promontory facing the east, called Syagrus (Ras Fartak) on which is . . . a harbour and storehouse for the Frankincense that is collected."

From this description two things are clear: (1) that the incense gathered in the Hadhramaut itself was brought by camels to Sabbathath, the Sabota of Pliny and the modern Shabwa, to be stored, and (2) that the incense of the Frankincense country, the modern Dhofar, was stored at Fartak and taken thence by sea to Cana, the modern Husn Ghorab or Raven Castle. From Cana it went

by caravan to Shabwa. From Shabwa the incense was taken *via* Petra to the Mediterranean. Pliny makes it quite clear that the incense was in the main through traffic. This being so it seems to me there is no point in imagining that those through loads of incense were carried on circuitous routes. Even the incense carried in dhows from Dhofar to Aden to-day requires whole caravans if carried overland, and there is no reason to suppose that the caravans of old followed any other than the shortest practicable route between Husn Ghorab and Shabwa. And I found when I followed that route there was plenty of evidence of its use in ancient days though it is practically deserted to-day. In all probability it was the main road, and I found evidence suggesting that the incense-bearing region of the Hadhramaut—a much smaller region than that of Dhofar—was also in that neighbourhood.

My journey was arranged on the spur of the moment. It was in April, 1939, and I was due to start on a tour of Malaya, Java, and Hyderabad in June. It was a long time since I had had a decent outing on camels, Mukalla was getting extremely hot, and there was far too much paper-work in the Residency. Both my assistants were on tour. My wife had just come back from an exciting trip in the Hajr Province. One morning—it was the 15th April—I was contemplating a file on the affairs of Bir ‘Ali which needed a closer attention than they were getting, when a peon brought in a wireless signal—about the tenth in half as many days—of trouble in the Shabwa-Al ‘Abr area. Why shouldn’t I go and see about it myself? Travel from Bir ‘Ali to Shabwa and see the incense road at the same time?

On the 17th I embarked with two companions on a small dhow called the *Venus*. One was Salih ‘Ali al Khulaqi, a Yafa‘i friend of previous journeys who had just come back with my wife, but was quite ready to start again, and the other ‘Umar Muheirez, one of my political assistants. Our captain was confident we should reach Bir ‘Ali the next morning, but there was little wind and we were barely moving when, three hours later at midnight, the lights of Mukalla were turned out and I drifted into sleep.

I woke at dawn to find us not near Bir ‘Ali but just off Burum, fourteen miles from Mukalla. However the breeze freshened and we were in Bir ‘Ali harbour just before sunset. No one knew we were coming, so Salih fired a couple of shots. The immediate result was not very promising, for we saw the gates of the little walled

town shut and everybody on the beach made haste to enter the wicket.

It is only Sultans and the like who fire shots of arrival, and as all the Sultans were complete and the people could not think who else could be coming in a friendly way they took their precautions. However a lad presently came off in a canoe to investigate, and seeing who it was returned to the shore. The gates were flung open again, off came a large boat for us, and as we reached the shore there was Sultan Nasir bin Talib in front of a long line of tribesmen welcoming us with round after round of rifle fire which stabbed the night with flashes of light.

We had only had a fish to eat since the night before so we did full justice to the mountain of mutton, wheat cakes, and Jerdan honey which appeared about ten, and soon after we were asleep on the palace roof.

Next morning after a breakfast of coffee, wheat cakes, and honey we embarked in canoes and visited Husn Ghorab on and around which are the ruins of Cana. If I had known what it was going to be like climbing the hill on a morning like that I should not have attempted it, for the path was precipitous and recent rains had made it more than usually difficult with three overhanging places which I could barely crawl past.

It was a magnificent fortress site. The top is covered with ruins of houses and cisterns and rubble, and the sandy spit below joining it to the mainland also has traces of old building. I saw the inscription Wellsted recorded about 1838. There is no doubt that this was the Cana of the Periplus, but it was also probably the Canneh of Ezechiel (xxvii, 23).

When we got back to Bir 'Ali the camels had not yet come, but during lunch Kennedy walked in from Balhaf on his way back to Mukalla with three miserable looking beasts following him. These we took over, and about two left the Bir with them and a one-armed beduin. It is an interesting commentary on travel in the Hadhramaut these days that we could leave without a weapon between us to cross Dhiyeibi country. But as it happened we did not meet a soul till we came near the Wadi Hajr, a day and a half later. It was most desolate country. Sand and basalt to begin with and then just rocks. All our beduin referred to it as the empty quarter and said many knew it as such. We reached the wall at Bana the next midday.

Here and there on the way we had come across Himyaritic scratchings, odd letters, and words hammered out on the rocks, which showed us we were passing along an ancient route. Of its importance there could be no doubt, for as we got nearer to Bana every little gulley which could have offered an alternative passage was blocked with a masonry wall, and the only passage was one 7 feet broad through this very impressive wall about 200 yards long which stretched from the mountain side to the precipitous wadi wall. The wall was built of shaped stones and was 4 or 5 feet thick and had been perhaps 20 feet high, though its top courses were much damaged in parts. In the passage, 17 feet in length, was the inscription copied by Von Wrede nearly a hundred years before, and by my wife a few weeks ago. No European had seen it between them (Pl. XVI, 1).

It was a well-chosen place, and 'Ali, our beduin, assured us that there was literally no other passable route. The Wadi Bana below had water in it and was here deep with unscalable walls. It was also so narrow that it reminded me of the Sik at Petra, and it opened out into a wider space such as that within which Petra is situated. There were a few caves, but nothing to show if there had been a settlement. I am inclined to believe this is the Bana of Ptolemy rather than the Wadi Bana, about 150 miles further west in Abyan in Fadhli country. There is a tradition in the Hadhramaut that the original home of the sons of 'Ad was at Bana and knowing no other Bana local historians have supposed it was in Abyan. But there are no ancient remains in the other Bana, and it seems probable that Ptolemy would have placed on his map the stages of the incense route which must have been one of the best known routes of ancient days. Furthermore everything suggested the truth of Pliny's account of a single track from which it was a capital offence to deviate. Von Wrede calls the place Obne or Libne, and this mistake has led to its being overlooked.

Bana, the inscription tells us, is a boundary, and it is interesting to compare the situation in the area to-day with what we know of the past. Bana is still a boundary between two kingdoms, the Wahidi Sultanates and the Qu'aiti State, but we can disregard that for present purposes for it only dates from the Qu'aiti conquest of Hajr Province in the last thirty years.

In the past the Himyarite kingdom had the coast and the Sabæans, of whom the Atramiṭæ were a community, the interior. It would

probably be fair to suppose that Nakab al Hajar, the Maipha Metropolis of Ptolemy, was their capital. The name Maipha remains for the wadi in which the ruins remain is called Meifa'a. That was their Pretoria, their Cape Town was Cana—Husn Ghorab. To-day the Wahidi country is divided into two sultanates held by branches of the same family. The Bir 'Ali branch lives at Bir 'Ali, a mile from Husn Ghorab and using the same harbour, and the Balhaf branch lives at 'Azzan, no more than a few miles from Nakab al Hajar. They have made a new port at Balhaf, a much inferior harbour to Bir 'Ali. So disregarding this fairly recent split you still have a Pretoria and a Cape Town on practically the old sites. Furthermore a section of the Wahidis is still called Himyar. What has happened to-day is that another section has become the leading one, as often happens in Arabian history.

The Bana wall is also a tribal boundary between the Wahidi tribes and the Hajr tribes who, I suggest, were tribes under the Atramitæ with their capital at Sabota or Sabbathatha, the modern Shabwa.

In the course of history Himyar absorbed Saba. When I was travelling over the road beyond Bana I asked, for political reasons, the various tribes up to and including the Bal 'Ubeid confederation, if they were independent, or acknowledged any Dola. Every one of them, including the Hakm at Ma'abir, said they were independent, but that of old the Sultan of Bir 'Ali had been their Dola. It seems to me that here there is an echo of the conquest of Saba by Himyar, and as we well know at Mukalla to-day the old Bir 'Ali Sultan was always claiming Shabwa and the tribes of Hajr, now under Qu'aiti rule, and the Bal 'Ubaid. He also claimed Wadi Jerdan, the Gorda of Ptolemy.

Pliny, who mentions that the section of the Sabæans living in Shabwa itself were the Atramitæ, i.e. the Hadhramis, tells us that the incense left Shabwa carried by the Minæans through their own country, when it passed through the countries of the Gebonitæ, the Carnaites, and the Nabatæans. Aelius Gallus' expedition against Sabæa got as far as the valley of the Minæans which may have been the Wadi Beihan. The furthest place they reached was Marsiabi, probably the country of the Mas'abi tribe. There is a story that the Empress Helena, an indefatigable searcher after sites connected with the New Testament story, sent envoys to South Arabia to discover the bones of the Magi. They are said

to have found them at Sessania Adrumetorium, and they duly returned with bones to Constantinople. They lay there until they were taken to Milan, and in 1164 to Cologne Cathedral. The only place in the Hadhramaut with a name in the least like Sessania is 'Azzan, the successor of Maipha metropolis. Possibly St. Helena had access to the writings of the classical geographers on the incense country and, if so, that city, whether on its old site or its new, would be as reasonable a place as any to search. Perhaps it was known as Sessania of the Hadhramis, the metropolis of the Meifa'a valley.

After descending a terrible pass at Nu'ab we got down within a few miles of the River Hajr that night, passing many inscriptions which I did not copy as my wife and Salih had already done so. There was a large number of rough inscriptions by the wayside, and these alone point to the road being important. As to-day so of old, no doubt, most of the people of the country were illiterate and it was only the "clerks" and merchants with caravans who passed idle moments at halts carving their names or odd letters by the wayside. Indeed Ibn Khallikan mentions in one of his biographies that only the upper classes were allowed to learn the Himyarite Musnad script. There are occasionally scribblings on most main routes in the Hadhramaut, but I have never seen so many as on this.

I was interested to see in this Hajr area a type of inscribed stone which my wife had discovered. She brought an example to Mukalla for the museum. These were upright stones sometimes carved with the representation of a bearded face with things rather like Egyptian symbols below. At the sides of the stone were others and a flat one laid before it so that the whole looked rather like a chair. They may have been wayside prayer places. Some were more perfect than others and some had no carvings.

Next morning we changed camels and for two days rode beside the river, bathing, swimming, and washing ourselves and our clothes in its limpid green waters (Pl. XVII, 2). Those were a pleasant two days, and we generally had company at meals. Indeed at lunch we usually got our visitors to make the bread in the ashes of the fire, hot sweet dough washed down with ample tea. 'Umar was tired—or lazy—at night, and Salih and I used to cook the dinner alternately. It was always the same, rice and dried fish cooked with spices and a small tin of tomatoes, and very good

it was too. If we were alone we fried the fish and tomatoes with the ghee and the rice, but if we had company we had to be mean, do the rice separately, and then make a soup of the fish and tomatoes to pour over it.

Two days, during which we saw inscriptions again by the wayside, brought us to Sidara. At intervals on various commanding points were the ruins of ancient fortresses attributed to the sons of 'Ad, and here on the heights above Sidara were more. All these places are known as Masna'a, and I felt confident that this commanding place was the Sadasera of Ptolemy.

Here at Sidara I had my first drink of *nebidh*, the wine tapped from the *nashar* palm. It was afternoon when it was brought to us, guaranteed fresh, and was delicious and refreshing to drink. Judging from the rather exalted state in which I was after finishing three large mugs I suspect it had started to ferment, but we all swore it was perfectly fresh, as of course it is forbidden for Muslims to drink fermented liquor.

The Wadi Hajr must be the River Prion of Ptolemy. For one thing the *Prionis fons* and *Prionis ostia* of his map give a river with very much the course of the Hajr, and for another the Hajr, being on the incense route from Cana to Shabwa, must have been a much better known river than the Maseila (Hadhramaut) with which Hogarth identified it. Like the Maseila the Hajr flows perennially and always reaches the sea. Why Ptolemy called it the River Saw is still doubtful. Forster once identified the Prion with the stream that runs above Burum on account of the serrated edges of the mountains there, and on this score Hajr can also be accepted, for the high mountains that mark its course are impressively serrated, while the flat-topped jols through which the Maseila runs for most of its course do not give the same impression when one is passing through its valley. I asked the people of Sidara if they could give an explanation, and I was offered the ingenious suggestion that the river was named after the serrated palm from which the *nebidh* is drawn, for both the palm (*nashar*) and the word for saw (*minshar*) come from the same Arabic root. My wife had seen on her Hajr trip more snakes than she had ever seen in all the Hadhramaut before, and my experience was the same. As I rode along one morning a green snake crossed the path and I asked if it was poisonous. I was told it was, but not very, but that there was in the district a red one whose bite caused instant

death, that it jumped at you, was *ahmar*, red or brown in colour, and was rarely found outside the Hajr region. This not only recalled Herodotus' story of the winged serpents which guarded the incense trees but also a report of Artemidorus, quoted by Strabo, who said that these serpents were a span long, red in colour, and sprang up as high as the thigh, and that their bite was incurable. I began to wonder if the Hajr region was not the Hadhramaut incense region of old, for in many of the little dry valleys off it the incense trees still flourish, and the incense is collected by Somali gatherers. One indeed had travelled with us in our dhow to Bir 'Ali, and told me a great deal more might be made of it than is made, but that until recently there had been no security in the province. Pliny says that the Hadhramaut incense region was eight stations from Sabbathath and was called Saba. It was inaccessible because of rocks on every side, while it was bounded on the right by the sea, from which it was shut out by tremendously high cliffs. Hajr suits Pliny's description as well as the Hadhramaut wadi, and in some ways even better, for owing to its difficult mountains and appalling passes it is certainly more inaccessible.

Pliny says that it was the Sabæans alone and no other people among the Arabians who beheld the incense trees, and not all of them, for not over 3,000 families had a right to that privilege by hereditary succession. He gives religious reasons for this, but it reminds me that to-day there are two scarce commodities in the Hadhramaut, each the monopoly of a tribe and indeed of certain families of those tribes. These are mangoes, grown only at Thila as Sufla, about twelve miles from Mukalla, and betel-leaf and areca-nuts grown by the Ba Hassan section of the Hamumis at Ma'adi. Others have often tried to grow these products, but the beduins concerned have invariably found out and sooner or later destroyed them. Mangoes and betel therefore fetch very high prices. So, too, perhaps there was a Sabæan monopoly of incense trees.

At Sidara we left the river and our first day out lunched at Mintaq, where there were some palms of a kind I had not yet seen, hot springs, and a hill of salt. The flavour of the salt was excellent, better I thought than that of Shabwa, but we tried in vain to knock respectably sized lumps off the great white vein exposed across the black face of the hill. We nighted in a barren valley, and next day saw incense trees growing on our way. There were still inscrip-

tions on the road, and that night we reached Yeb'eth, where we stayed with friends.

Though Von Wrede had visited Bana he had not mapped the route properly, and the way thence from Bir 'Ali had never been travelled ; so from Bir 'Ali to the Hajr, which had been well mapped by Von Wissmann, I made a compass traverse. From the Hajr to Yeb'eth had all been done by Von Wissmann, so I had not had to bother about it. But from Yeb'eth to Shabwa I had to take up my compass again. Most of the bearings from Bir 'Ali to Hajr had been about 340 degrees, and so they were from Yeb'eth onwards. Up to Yeb'eth there was a much-used caravan track, but I was told there was little traffic beyond it. All the way had been marked by inscriptions, and those curious piles of stones called '*urum*. These we had remarked in the Sei'ar country, round Al 'Abr and elsewhere. Bertram Thomas had also noted them in Mahra country. They usually consist of a dozen or more piles of stones with big ones upright, and either in the middle or at the end of the row a circular enclosure. I have never found a convincing explanation of the '*urums*. They were usually by the roadside, but sometimes on the crest of neighbouring hills. Beduin suggested that they were either places for huntsmen to hide for driven gazelle or for defence, and that archers lay there to protect the routes.

We were shown some inscriptions in the Wadi Yeb'eth itself. They included representations of pairs of feet carved on some of the stones, which I had also found in association with crosses in what were alleged to be places of old Christian worship in Socotra. I have seen also a well-executed carving of crosses and feet on a marble in the Cairo Museum, and Miss Caton Thompson found an inscribed foot at Hureidha. But I felt doubtful if the incense caravans came down into the wadi.

There was no need for them to do so if they could get water from the still-used cisterns above, and the 'aqabas were dreadful. We left the place by the so-called White 'Aqaba the next day, after a pleasant lunch and bathe in a stream under the shade of the palms at Gheil. As we sat there under the trees discussing affairs and our doings a chief of the Nu'man, the tribe inhabiting this part of the country, who had accompanied us from his village of Al Qona, unfastened the *fas*, the cornelian in a silver setting worn by most tribesmen and said to have medicinal properties, from about his neck and tied it round mine, remarking that as



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

I lived as a beduin I ought to wear what the beduin wear. That done he bade me good-bye.

I started to walk up the White 'Aqaba before two, and it was after half-past five when I got to the top with my boots cut to pieces. Once on the top we had no further difficulties till we reached the 'aqaba of the Wadi 'Irma three days away. We passed through the country of the nomadic Mushajira, occasionally meeting shepherdesses with their flocks and beduins, and the second night arrived at the little village of Sha'abat in the Bal 'Ubeid country. None of the villagers had seen a European before, but as soon as they knew my name we were given a warm welcome. They had joined in the Hadhramaut peace and were grateful for the quiet lives they now led. Dinner of hot broth, cold mutton, and bread arrived late as usual. Salih and I were glad not to have to pound up dried fish for the night, and we did ample justice to the simple meal served among some ruins outside the village, where we had chosen to night instead of in a hot dar with the mosquitoes.

Sha'abat was a pleasant little village, and its fields and trees were all green from recent rain, but there were no ancient ruins. One old man said he would take me to some the next day. He was as good as his word, and early enough we were on the way to Ma'abar. Though the road was no longer much used plainly it had once been important, for apart from the usual '*urums* and inscriptions and carvings of ibex and the sun and an occasional camel, it was from six to twelve lanes wide. But after an hour or two we went on to a minor road to Ma'abar. We descended into a valley, our path lined with '*urums* and one arranged like an aisle with an altar at the top. Here we were told a marble figure had been found. In a green field at the bottom was the white marble plinth of what had apparently been a lovely little rectangular temple. We scratched among the ruins on top of it and around it, but found no more than a few potsherds (Pl. XVII, 1).

After a light lunch and coffee with the old chief and his followers we left with his blessing. He had not seen a European before, never having left Ma'abar, but we had corresponded on the subject of the peace. After an hour or two we got back on the old road, clearly the main road, and camped on the desolate jol near a water cistern, having seen a lot more graffiti and pictures of ibexes, suns, and crescent moons.

Next day we fell in with a couple of thieves who made the uncon-

vincing explanation that they were sitting on a hill above the road waiting for a friend who had promised to bring them a present from the Bir. All through this country Bir 'Ali is referred to as the Bir, the well, Balhaf as the Ras, the cape, and Mukalla as the Suq, the market. The two men, one rather a bounder and the other quieter and more helpful, joined us, and presently we came across the Mujurra. We had been told it was a motor-road and it looked for all the world like one. The stones had been cleared off and piled along the sides, as they are on our Hadhramaut tracks. Who had made it, I asked. The sons of 'Ad, was the reply: they used motors, too. It called up lovely visions of the young giants of the days of Genesis scorching over the jols in Austin Sevens as the young bloods do in Tarim to-day. Another explanation offered was that they were the tracks by which the prophet Salih's she-camel had walked into the rock, for South Arabia also claims the prophet of Thamud in the north. Possibly these roads were cleared to enable large blocks of stones for building at Shabwa to be moved along them on tree trunks used as rollers.

The Mujurra extended for miles and after gaps started again and reached almost to the 'Aqaba of Futura which leads down to 'Irma. On our way we had pointed out to us where Kilwa lay, one of the quarries of Shabwa, and we passed through another ancient quarry called Qudhih. After a long and gentle slope down we reached the 'aqaba, and there near its top was a long well-carved Himyaritic inscription. I copied it, racing against the fading light, and we made out the words "King So and So, son of King So and So", " 'Irma ", " 4 leopards ", from which we judged it commemorates a hunting expedition. But Mr. Philby will tell you about it.

The ancients had built a splendid wide masonry descent called the Tariq 'Adiya or Adite Road, but, alas, it had practically disappeared, and when I reached the bottom the sole of my other boot was flapping loose. We had no water, but were all tired and fell asleep on the sand.

I was awoken a couple of hours later by a feminine voice saying, "Milk, milk." Three beduin girls had brought us milk and water. All were comely and one quite lovely. With such company we soon came to life and cooked dinner, which our fair companions stayed to share. Afterwards they taught us beduin games on the sand, scratching mazes we had to follow to the centre, and a game of raids. It was midnight when they left to go home and we retired.

to our blankets, and again in the morning they brought us fresh milk.

Next day we wandered down the valley to Ma'fud, being greeted there in the usual tribal way by a salute of rifle fire. But the fashion in salutes in this area between the Hadhramaut and the western Protectorate is very alarming. Instead of firing straight up in the air they fire just above your head and you are supposed to look as if you liked it. As I am rather taller than the usual run of South Arabians I don't like it at all.

After lunch we parted with the Sheikh who had brought us from Yeb'eth, and we started off with the Muqaddam's brother on three good camels for Shabwa, intending to night there. 'Irma was full of ancient traces, rough buildings, and irrigation works, but the most interesting of all was the 'aqaba by which we left it. Much of the ancient masonry the Sabæans had built remained, and, as our guide pointed out, it was wide enough for wheeled vehicles. It was in fact about 16 feet wide, far wider than any built 'aqaba I have seen elsewhere. He, too, repeated the story of the cars, but said that though he did not believe the ancients had them it seemed clear they had used wheeled vehicles, at any rate to bring the great cut stones to Shabwa. It was again dusk as we came down this 'aqaba, and I only had time to copy the first of three long well-cut inscriptions we saw.

In the morning we rode the remaining few miles to Shabwa, an island in the desert, noting the extensive signs of ancient cultivation through which we passed, showing how in its prime Shabwa must have presented a fair sight of white buildings on a hill set among green fields.

We entered through the traces of an ancient gateway, and I told our guide of Pliny's story of the gate always left open for the incense, with a secretary of the King in attendance.

"And there no doubt is where he sat," said he, pointing to an alcove corresponding to those at the gates of any Hadhrami town to-day, where the clerk sits at the receipt of customs.

I found the ruins of Shabwa depressing in their uncared for desolation. We found the figure of a winged female holding a cornucopia, and after a considerable consumption of camel's milk we looked at the salt mines, and passed through another gate into the desert. These beduins have a fine custom as regard the camels' milk. Any stranger may go up and start milking a camel, and if he

once begins the owner or anyone else will help him to get all he wants. We were glad enough of this custom, for we had before us a twenty-hour ride over desert with not a drop of water or particle of shade. It was pleasant enough at night, but the endless climbing up and slithering down yellow dunes the height of houses on the 1st May decided me that I had had enough of the Rub' al Khali when we got to Al 'Abr the following evening, having milked every camel we could find on the way.

I find it interesting to compare the country of old with the country to-day, and to ask if the civilization then was any better than now. Some people looking at the ruins and the miserable poverty and precarious life of the beduins living in and around them to-day are inclined to think it was, and one is tempted sometimes to agree because the medium in which the builders of those days worked was stone and more durable than the mud of to-day. And they certainly shaped their stones and carved their inscriptions in a way the Hadhramaut masons of to-day don't do. But this apart, what are the two pictures? The right comparison is, I think, not between the Himyar-Saba country of old and its present condition, but between the Hadhramaut then and now.

Of old there was the coastal kingdom of Himyar based on Maipha metropolis or Sessania and Cana; and the interior kingdom of Hadhramaut based on Sabbathath or Sabota. The kings of these places took a heavy rake-off on goods passing through, there were constant wars and shifting of power. There was an educated class who had a monopoly of learning, and there were beduins, the tribes of Kinda, who produced such a poet as Imru'l Qeis. The people of the towns seem to have produced nothing of any artistic value. Their agriculture was done with irrigation and bunds and, to get a picture of village life, you should read Miss Caton Thompson's monograph. Hureidha, then Madhab, was a country village on the eastern outskirts of Saba. Did the country live on agriculture? No, it lived on the incense trade. It was eventually the people in Egypt, Greece, and Rome who paid for the temples of Sabota.

To-day, to the east of the old kingdoms, there is the coastal kingdom of the Qu'aitis, based on Mukalla, and the interior one of the Kathiris based on Saiyun. The rulers of these places and any others who can, take duties on goods passing through. There is an educated class principally of sayyids, and there are beduin tribes, the descendants of the beduin tribes of old like the Sei'ar who

derive from Kinda, or the descendants of the Himyarites and Sabæans who have become beduins. Ruling dynasties of to-day were beduin yesterday and vice versa. Agriculture is carried out just as it was, but the country can no more live on it now than it did then. Before the war it was Java and Singapore which paid for the palaces of Seiyun and Tarim.

When the Romans took the incense by sea the first Hadhramaut perished. The new Hadhramaut learnt to emigrate and get money abroad. Although they build in mud they build so extraordinarily well that they cannot be considered inferior to the Hadrami craftsmen of old. The fall of Singapore and Java has shown that the Hadhramaut of to-day would perish just as the one of old did if the country could not get money from abroad.